Some aspects of guerilla warfare in Vietnam

SOME ASPECTS OF GUERILLA WARFARE IN VIETNAM

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PUBLISHER'S NOTE

In the present situation of the world, however small and weak a people may be, once it rises up united and struggles resolutely along a just line for independence, it is quite able to vanquish a powerful army of an imperialist aggressor and his hirelings, and shatter all his manœuvres.

This striking truth of our epoch has been evidenced in Vietnam by two wars of resistance: the first from 1945 to 1954 against the U.S.-supported French colonialists, which ended with the 1954 Geneva Conference, and the second against the U.S. imperialist aggressors who are losing their "special war" in South Vietnam and their escalation in North Vietnam.

In answer to our request, Lieutenant-General Hoang Van Thai, Deputy-Head of the General Staff of the Vietnam People's Army, has been kind enough to outline the problem of guerilla warfare within the general framework of the national revolution and people's war in Vietnam. We have

deemed it interesting to collect some short stories to illustrate this important, if not fundamental, aspect of our struggle against imperialism. Without a look into it, no understanding is possible as to how Vietnam, a colonial people poorly armed and equipped, could achieve such a great feat as the Dienbienphu victory and can now face the U.S. Army successfully.

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PART I

ON SOME FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OF GUERILLA WARFARE IN VIETNAM

Vietnam, a relatively small country without a very large population, has a long past marked by struggles against foreign invasion and for national construction.

Bachdang, Chilang, Dongda*, Dienbienphu, and many other names have been throughout the ages glorious landmarks in the history of the Vietnamese people's struggle for independence.

Since the birth of the Indochinese Communist Party headed by Comrade Ho Chi Minh, the Vietnamese people have scored achievements of unprecedented importance. They made the 1945 August Revolution, broke the French-Japanese yoke and founded the Democratic Republic of Vietnam, the first people's democratic state in Southeast Asia. Then they vanquished the French imperialists and

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* Victories over foreign invaders won by the Vietnamese armed forces and people:

Bachdang (1288): A river in North Vietnam where General Tran Hung Dao destroyed an army half a million strong under Gengis Khan's grand son.

Chilang (1427): A mountain pass in North Vietnam where Le Loi gained a victory over the Mings crowning ten years of people's resistance.

Dongda (1789): A place near Hanoi where Nguyen Hue, leader of a peasant insurrection, defeated a 200,000-strong army of the Tsing invaders.

U.S. interventionists in the first war of resistance (1945-1954). At present, the South Vietnamese people are waging a second war of resistance against the U. S. aggressors and their stooges, a liberation war which is winning ever more decisive successes.

In the course of the revolutionary struggles and wars of resistance in Vietnam, guerilla warfare has always occupied a very important place. This short account will deal with some fundamental problems and mention a certain number of experiences relative to that warfare.

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ROLE AND IMPORTANCE OF GUERILLA WARFARE IN VIETNAM

Marxism-Leninism has taught the Vietnamese people a lesson which has been confirmed by their own experiences: to free themselves from the yoke of the imperialists and their agents, they have no other way than *to use revolutionary violence to smash the rulers' administrative machinery and build up for themselves a people's dictatorship.*

The Indochinese Communist Party, the present Vietnam Workers' Party, have creatively applied Marxism-Leninism to Vietnam's practical situation. Under their leadership, the Vietnamese people has made a national-democratic revolution along a correct line to overthrow the imperialist oppressors and the reactionary feudal class, and win back national independence and land for the tillers.

This correct line has encouraged the large masses of the people, especially the toiling peasants to rise up and wage an evergrowing struggle for the accomplishment of the revolutionary tasks set by the Party. Availing itself of the experiences drawn by the world proletariat

from their revolutionary struggles, *our Party has worked out adequate forms of political and armed struggle at the various stages of the revolution.* At each stage, each form of struggle has a role to play and exercises a definite action. But in the whole process of the revolution, armed struggle has had a direct and decisive action. It has always been linked to political struggle from which it stemmed, then developed into armed insurrection and reached its highest form which was the people's war, a war fought by the entire people on all planes.

In Vietnam, guerilla warfare is a form of armed struggle in particular and of revolutionary struggle in general.

It was a guerilla warfare conducted in localities where conditions were available, which led to the creation of revolutionary conditions in the period of preparation for the 1945 August Revolution in order successfully to stage local insurrections and general insurrection. In this period, *guerilla warfare was a form of armed insurrection for the seizure of power, and a question of revolutionary strategy.*

During the first war of resistance (1945-1954), guerilla warfare helped us to push the struggle ahead and turn the patriotic war against the French imperialists and U.S. interventionists into a real people's war, a war waged by the entire people on all planes. Guerilla warfare was a school for the Vietnamese people to train themselves in the fight for national salvation, to form cadres and build up military and paramilitary forces. In the enemy's rear, guerilla warfare demoralized, wore out, disintegrated and destroyed his troops, pinned down his mobile forces, and co-ordinated its action with that of the regular warfare on the main theatre of operations. Better still, it was a form of armed insurrection for the seizure of power and establishment of guerilla base areas. It effectually frustrated the enemy's "lightning war" plan and his manœuvres to feed war with war and make Vietnamese fight Vietnamese. It transformed the enemy's rear into zones of operations, and helped us create a permanent strategic offensive position there. *During the war of resistance*

against the French imperialists, guerilla warfare constituted an important strategic problem, one of the two basic forms of the people's war, gave birth to regular warfare, and co-ordinated its action with the latter to defeat the enemy.

At present, the struggle for liberation waged by the South Vietnamese people is a guerilla warfare at its highest stage. It started with local insurrections by which the toiling peasants seized power in the villages, and gradually expanded into a vast and steady movement of political struggle by rural and urban masses in co-ordination with guerilla warfare which unceasingly grew in intensity everywhere. During the last ten years, with no arms in hands at the beginning, the South Vietnamese people have achieved a great work, liberated four-fifths of the territory with over ten million people, shattered all the U.S. imperialists' aggressive schemes and won glorious victories: Apbac, Chala, Locninh, Bienhoa, Binhgia, Anlao, Pleiku, Quinhon, Phumy, Saigon... All this series of successes testified to the rapid growth of the guerilla warfare carried out by our fourteen million Southern compatriots, a war long and hard but certainly victorious. It shows that the U.S. imperialists and their agents are doomed to failure: U.S. special warfare has been and will be defeated by the people's guerilla warfare. *At present, guerilla warfare in South Vietnam constitutes not only a military tactics or strategy, but also a form of armed insurrection by the peasantry in the process of a protracted revolution taking place in a set balance of forces between revolution and counter-revolution in a backward agricultural country under neo-colonialism.* Stemming from the people's political struggle, it has become a tool for the maintenance and development of the revolution staged by the masses.

Dominated for many decades by imperialism, Vietnam was in the same conditions as many other colonial and dependent countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Thanks to revolution and long years of a

revolutionary war, North Vietnam has been completely liberated and is steadily progressing toward socialism, while South Vietnam has been winning decisive successes. Reality has shown that *revolutionary violence, revolutionary struggle and protracted revolutionary war in which guerilla warfare occupies an extremely important place, is the path our people must follow to reconquer independence, freedom and happiness.* Reality has also shown that in the present juncture of the world, *when a people, however small and weak, is united to rise up and follow a correct line, determined to struggle for its dearest aspirations, and creatively applies adequate forms of struggle, that people is fully able to vanquish a powerful army of any imperialist aggressor and his hirelings,* be the U.S. aggressor, chieftain of world imperialism.

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CHARACTERS AND FORMS OF GUERILLA WARFARE IN VIETNAM

In Vietnam guerilla warfare is a form of armed struggle of the large masses of the people, of the local military and paramilitary forces which are weak or relatively weak, against much better equipped enemy troops. It consists in dealing blows to the enemy everywhere, with all means and weapons available, in conducting scattered fights and, at the same time, in mobilizing the people for the struggle with most varied forms. It aims at thinning out and destroying the enemy's live force, defending and preserving our political and economic strength. It compels the enemy to disperse his forces, thus creating conditions for us to develop our regular warfare and operate in coordination with it to achieve victory.

In Vietnam, guerilla warfare bears the following fundamental characters:

1. Mass character, people's character. Guerilla warfare is a common form of armed struggle by various strata of the people, old and young, men and women of all religions, nationalities and political tendencies. *In a backward agricultural country like Vietnam, it is the common form of armed struggle by the toiling peasants.* "He who has a gun should use his gun, he who has a sword should use his sword, he who has no sword should use picks, mattocks, and sticks"*. It is in this spirit that every Vietnamese patriot has risen up against the invaders. It is for this reason that guerilla warfare has developed throughout the country, in delta and mountain, in town and countryside. It constitutes a kind of magic network which holds the enemy in its meshes, scatters his forces, harasses him day and night, wears him out and drives him to a war of attrition without a way out.

2. All-sided character. By means of guerilla warfare, the Vietnamese people have fought the enemy not only in the military but also in the economic and political fields. *The close connection between armed struggle on the one hand and economic and political struggle on the other, is a characteristic of guerilla warfare in Vietnam.* Economic struggle consists in blocking the enemy's economy, sabotaging his economic bases, frustrating his design of feeding war with war, turning his rear into ours, and depriving him of his sources of manpower and wealth. Political struggle aims at mobilizing and organizing the masses in the enemy's rear to defend their vital rights, denouncing his manœuvres and attack his political foundations so as to weaken and dislocate them.

In Vietnam, guerilla warfare has been waged in the conditions in which *the people have to face an enemy much superior in equipment and technique: French imperialism in*

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* Appeal by President Ho Chi Minh for national resistance (December 1946).

the first war of resistance, and U.S. imperialism at present. This experience lies within the scope of a general law governing all wars of liberation made by oppressed peoples against stronger imperialist enemies. With their bare hands at the start, the Vietnamese people have resolutely risen up and resisted to the end, carried out construction while combating, grew with the fighting, and equipped themselves with weapons captured from the enemy. They have opposed their courage and self-sacrificing spirit to enemy aircraft, cannons, tanks and warships. Therefore in Vietnam, guerilla warfare has been *bitter and fierce, long and hard.*

In guerilla warfare, the Vietnamese people have created extremely varied forms of struggle: sabotage, scorched land policy, non-co-operation with the enemy, stratagems to harass or wear out the enemy, spike traps, mine traps, and traps of many other kinds, attacks on communication lines, ambushes, raids against the enemy post network, airfields, dumps, C.P.s, gun-nests... Guerilla warfare takes higher forms, when the fighters storm the adversary's posts to attract and destroy his reinforcements, frustrate mopping-up operations, raze concentration camps and strategic hamlets while building combat villages. All these forms are suitable to the people's and all-sided character of guerilla warfare, they are an expression of the large masses' participation in the patriotic war in which weak forces are opposed to strong ones, and rudimentary weapons to modern ones They drive the enemy's troops into an impasse in spite of his superiority in arms and equipment (aviation, navy, armoured force and others) and make him unable to counter-attack efficaciously. U.S. military theoricians have admitted that the war in Vietnam is holding in store for them surprises which are to be found in no military text-books. The more developed the guerilla warfare with an ever larger participation of the people, the richer its concrete forms.

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LESSONS TAUGHT BY GUERILLA WARFARE IN VIETNAM

The success of guerilla warfare in Vietnam is that of a just war waged by the people over the unjust war by aggressive imperialism. It is also that of our correct political and military lines, and of the creative application of Marxism-Leninism to the concrete situation in Vietnam.

Following are the main lessons we have learnt:

1. *We must mobilize, train, and organize the masses and encourage them to participate in ever greater numbers in guerilla warfare.*

Every achievement is performed by the people. We must see to uniting the entire people, mobilizing and arming them. This springs from our following conception: revolution is the work of the masses of the people who precisely decide the outcome of the war. To be able to mobilize and organize the masses, *we must first and foremost work out a correct political line likely to satisfy the fundamental aspirations of the toiling masses,* particularly the workers and peasants; we must constantly foster their love for the fatherland and their hatred for the enemy, inspire them with high revolutionary consciousness, courage to fight whatever aggressor, spirit of relying on their own strength and will for independence and sovereignty; we must train them in enduring privations, overcoming difficulties and fighting resolutely until final victory is won. We must organize them into a broad united national front on the basis of the worker-peasant alliance, unceasingly consolidate the political forces which form the cornerstone of guerilla warfare, set up the people's military and paramilitary forces and temper them in the fight.

2. We must constantly and *closely co-ordinate political struggle with armed struggle, firmly grasp the three fundamental tasks of guerilla warfare, correctly lay down the*

guiding principle of action in each of the three zones of the country.

As has been said above, the close link between political and armed struggles was in the past a characteristic of guerilla warfare in Vietnam, it still is at the present time in South Vietnam. In tightly co ordinating these two forms of struggle we aim at furthering the political supremacy of the masses in rural and urban areas, striking at the weak points of the enemy and shaking to their foundations his political and military bases. For this purpose, we must satisfactorily carry out the three main tasks of guerilla warfare — armed attack and political attack on the adversary, and agitation in his ranks — in order to put into practice the watchword: "Workers, peasants and soldiers, unite!", thereby enlarging the revolutionary ranks and, at the same time, weakening the enemy's. The realization of these tasks must *follow leading principles suitable to each of the three zones.*

a) In the enemy-occupied zone, priority is given to political struggle. Here revolutionary force must be enlarged constantly and the masses trained for struggle in simple and then complex forms.

b) In the guerilla zone, contended by the two parties, political struggle must be combined with armed struggle and we must stick to the people and the locality where we operate.

c) In the guerilla base areas, parallel with construction work in all fields, we must prevent and frustrate all the enemy's encroachment attempts.

The question is gradually to transform the guerilla zone into a guerilla base area and the enemy-occupied zone into a guerilla zone, in order to enlarge our liberated zone and narrow down the enemy occupied zone. In this way, guerilla warfare does not cease to develop and advance to ever higher forms, creating conditions favourable to the promotion of regular warfare to win final victory.

3. *We must unceasingly consolidate and extend the guerilla base areas and build combat villages.* Guerilla bases and combat villages constitute the rears as well as the fortresses of the guerilla forces. In consequence, the launching and maintenance of guerilla warfare are closely connected with the consolidation and extension of guerilla bases and with the building of combat villages. The primordial condition to set up a guerilla base is the political consciousness of the masses of the people. Therefore, to build solid guerilla bases and combat villages, *leading cadres and guerilla forces must stick to the people and the place where they operate. They must constantly educate, organize and lead the masses to the struggle,* see to it that the masses' living conditions be improved, and land distributed to the peasants if local conditions permit to do so. We must know how to take advantage of the facilities of the terrain or modify it to make it suit our purpose, erect simple yet efficient defence works, underground hiding-places, spike and other traps, mine fields in order to check the enemy's mopping-up operations and preserve our bases. We must not only constantly consolidate the latter politically, militarily and economically, but also enlarge them by means of transforming guerilla zones into guerilla bases and creating as many of these as is possible to establish a system of bases capable of supporting one another to encircle and scatter enemy troops and thus better strike at them.

4. *There must be a close co-ordination of action between the military forces and people's paramilitary forces, especially between local troops and self-defence militia.*

The militia constitutes the paramilitary force of the masses, first of all, the toiling peasants. They do not give up production, they carry it on and while embarking in production they fight to safeguard it, they stick to the people and to their locality, forming the core of the guerilla forces in the villages. Local troops are the armed forces of provinces and districts, the core of the guerilla

forces there and, at the same time, the link between the militia and regular troops. While the people's militia conducts the struggle in the villages to pin down the enemy and create conditions for local troops to muster and destroy the enemy, the latter assume the heavy task of helping the militia to develop. On the other hand, when regular troops scatter in small units to start guerilla warfare in the enemy's rear, they must make it a duty to train the local troops and militia. The close co-ordination between the military and paramilitary forces is a condition to ensure the growth of guerilla warfare into regular warfare.

5. *The principles on guerilla warfare must be understood thoroughly and applied correctly.*

These principles govern all the guerilla activities of the military and paramilitary forces, they aim at enabling these forces to secure victory over an enemy stronger in equipment and technique. According to our own experience, the following principles must be firmly grasped: to develop to the highest point the moral factor, courage, initiative and cleverness so as to defeat a much better equipped enemy; to strive to destroy as many enemy live forces as possible while preserving and developing our own; to strive to annihilate enemy forces in small operations, while exhausting him on a large scale; constantly to ensure the initiative of action and never to allow ourselves to be driven to the defensive; always to act with flexibility, in secrecy and surprise; strike at the enemy where he is weak and exposed, in whatever difficult situation the cadres and militiamen must stick to the people and to their locality and mobilize the masses for the struggle.

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Above-mentioned are some fundamental questions of guerilla warfare in Vietnam.

Thanks to a through understanding of these questions, the Vietnamese people under the leadership of the Party of the proletariat, succeeded in overthrowing the French-Japanese yoke, vanquish the U.S.-supported French Expeditionary Corps, and at present are defeating the American aggressors in their war of destruction against North Vietnam. In South Vietnam, under the leadership of the South Vietnam National Front for Liberation, the army and people have developed the traditions and experiences acquired in the first Resistance war and thoroughly grasp these basic problems. This explains why the further they fight the stronger they become and are now driving the U.S. imperialists into a blind tunnel. For these last ten years and more, the U.S. Government representing the U.S. monopolists, has spent more than four million dollars which it extorted from the American people, and sent to South Vietnam an important amount of war material, tens of thousands of officers and men ; with the local agents at its service, it has conducted " special warfare " aimed at dominating South Vietnam. To repress the revolutionary movement of the people in South Vietnam, it has shrunk from no barbarous acts, including the use of noxious chemicals there and attack with air and naval forces on the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. But all these efforts have failed in the face of the guerilla warfare waged by the South Vietnamese people in co-ordination with the telling rebuffs of the North Vietnamese people. Guerilla warfare is defeating the U.S. " special warfare " and frustrating all attempts at destruction and sabotage against North Vietnam. This reality shows that guerilla warfare conducted by the people according to just political and military lines, has all possibilities to vanquish whatever imperialist aggressor.

U.S. imperialism is the enemy No. I of the Vietnamese people, the Indochinese peoples and the peoples of the world. The Vietnamese people distinguish it from the American people who enjoy traditions of freedom and

democracy. They are resolved to struggle shoulder to shoulder with the American people and the peoples of the world to destroy the common enemy. U.S. imperialism, a giant on clay feet, is weakened and isolated more than ever.

Final victory belongs to the Vietnamese people, to the oppressed peoples, and to all the peace-loving people of the world.

Lieutenant-General HOANG VAN THAI
Deputy-head of the General Staff
of the Vietnam People's Army

PART II

I — GUERILLA STRATAGEMS

The following stories will show how an entire people, men, women, the aged and children stirred by patriotism can effectually participate in guerilla warfare.

STORIES OF THE FIRST WAR OF RESISTANCE (1946 1954)

COUGHING

Gun-nests, watchtowers, barbed wire fences, bamboo spikes, nothing was wanting around that brand-new post which was to bring security to a district in Haiduong province known to be "infested" with guerillas. The men in the garrison might set their mind at rest.

The guerillas came several nights but dared not approach too near. They blindly fired some shots with their rifles, just to disturb the puppet soldiers in their sleep. The enemy sentinels on their part did but send now and then a volley of Tommy-gun into darkness.

But one night a cough was heard from the barbed wire fences. "It's serious this time!" thought the sentries. The alarm was given. Guns of all calibres spat fire. Hardly had

they stopped when the cough was heard again, more distinctly and more frequently. Great God! the Vietminh could certainly have slipped through the fences and would be ready to attack. The powerful batteries of the Kesat neighbouring post began to pound in support of the defence. At daybreak, firing stopped together with the cough. A narrow escape, indeed!

What actually had occurred? The people's militia of Haiduong had devised a stratagem to harass the enemy. They had introduced a small ball of tobacco into the mouth of a toad whose jaws they bound together. The animal was then hung at the barbed wire fences, at a late hour. With an irritated throat, it coughed just like a man.

The experience was afterwards popularized among the guerillas of other districts so much so toad raising became a special trade occupation in several villages.

FOREWARNED, FOREARMED?

Highway 5, a hinge of the Red River delta, links Hanoi to Haiphong port where men and materials would be landed for the French troops in North Indochina. The daily ambushes and attacks on convoys along this 100-kilometre-long vital communication line caused the French command serious headache.

One morning of the year 1950, a convoy found a poster planted right in the middle of the roadway with this notice: "Attention aux mines"!

"That's surely one of their devilish tricks," grumbled the captain while alighting from his jeep. "If I could take hold of the Vietminh who..."

The whole convoy stopped. The sappers had to detect mines all the same. It might be a serious warning made by our men. The captain boiled over.

A good hour was lost while the post which had called for reinforcement was waiting impatiently. At last the column could move on after having found out a false mine.

The same irritating trick was met with again on other sections of the road and the drivers paid no more attention to the posters. Every time they came across one of them, they stopped a few seconds, just enough time to pull it up

and throw it aside. Some simply dashed at the obstacle and quietly drove on the false mine traps.

One day, a big truck rushed towards Haiduong, a city situated on Highway 5 between Hanoi and Haiphong. The driver pulled up suddenly : he had just noticed one of those posters fixed at a pole. He violently took away the board. A formidable explosion was heard. The driver and forty soldiers were blown up into the air while the truck smashed in a neighbouring ricefield.

DIAMOND CUT DIAMOND

This also happened on the famous Highway 5. Ty, a guerilla of Haiduong province, under favour of the night, hurriedly buried a mine. He lay in ambush, squatting in a dug-out some distance away. At daybreak, there came a patrol. Ty was eagerly waiting for the right moment to pull at the string attached to the detonator. Unfortunately a soldier detected the badly camouflaged mine and warned his fellows. In great anger, Ty had only the time to twist his way along the ricefields to disappear as rapidly as possible. The patrol followed the string and found out Ty's hiding place. They pulled at the string to make the mine explode and burst out laughing cunningly.

For Ty, it was a heart-rending sight. He railed at his inadvertency because mines were not easy to be obtained.

The next morning, he carelessly buried a false mine made of clay at quite visible a spot. The same patrol came to pass. The same trick was repeated. While their commander was exulting near a hillock, six soldiers stepped into the hiding place and pulled at the string. They were blown into the air.

The survivors ran away out of breath. They had not expected that the other end of the string was attached to a real mine planted in the hiding place.

SHADDOCKS

What tempted most the enemy garrison at Camgiang was juicy and delicious shaddocks, which refresh your

throat in the dog-days. In shaddock season, every time the French soldiers mopped up the neighbouring villages, they did not fail to lay hands on the fruit put up for sale in the market-place or hanging from the trees in orchards.

One day of July 1949, a patrol came across a young woman carrying two big baskets of shaddocks. Frightened she hurriedly turned towards the nearest village. The mercenaries shouted for her; she ran away still faster, scattering the shaddocks all along her way.

Cut to the quick, the gang began to track her. Arrived at the foot of a banyan, the brave woman fell down out of exhaustion, her fruit mingling with a beautiful shaddock which happened to lie on the roadway. She rose up, redoubled her speed and rapidly disappeared behind the bamboo hedge of the village.

The soldiers rushed to the fruit, the most gluttonous of them took as many as four or five. All of a sudden, a mine exploded, flinging four torn bodies on to a ricefield nearby.

The shaddock at the foot of the banyan was a trap and the woman was sent out to lure the French into it.

A BANANA TRAP

It was in the first days of the occupation, the guerillas had no arms and guerilla warfare was at its beginning.

At a place in Saigon suburbs, there stood a sentry-box. The sentinel was the same French soldier for several days. He now and then fished from his pockets a sweet or even a banana to eat.

One morning, while on duty he saw two men carrying savoury bananas in large baskets with a flail. Unable to resist the temptation, he called for them. To his beckon, one of the man gave him a big bunch of good ripe bananas. He hurriedly reached out his hands to take it when a formidable stroke of the flail at his head sent him to the ground.

The two guerillas disappeared rapidly with the sentry's gun.

A BOXING MATCH AT A MARKET PLACE

The Go market was known in the whole region of Binhhoa for the abundance and variety of its goods. The peasants streamed there from places ten miles around.

Unfortunately, the enemy came and planted a post in the neighbourhood. On market days, the mercenaries from the garrison would come to Go. They would brutalize the women, buy at dirt-cheap prices or simply plunder.

On March 5, 1948, two French soldiers with Tommy-guns in hands, walked into the crowded market as if they were strolling in a deserted place. They waddled about, kicking right and left to break their way through, then stepped over an old woman and trampled under foot the baskets and carrying-poles scattering on the ground. They went so far as blatantly to embrace women and caress their breasts. Finally they entered a cook-shop, leaned their guns against their chairs and set about to devour plenty of delicious roasted cakes.

Suddenly they heard many shouts of kids. Before them, two lads fought fiercely, using their feet, hands, heads and even their teeth. People crowded around the fighters. Someone wanted to part them. But with a threatening gesture, the soldiers prevented him to do so and noisily encouraged the boys to go on boxing for them to see gratis. After a few minutes' contest, the vanquished ran away as fast as his legs could carry him, closely followed by the victor.

The two soldiers also stood up to go away, but their Tommy-guns had disappeared. Before they could react, they were assailed and beaten by the crowd with the help of the guerillas who had staged the boxing match. The local militia who so far had but swords and daggers got two Tommy-guns, their first fire-arms.

IN THE HOABINH MOUNTAINS

Late in 1948, Quyetthang village in mountainous Hoabinh province was subject to frequent raids. The population was massacred and paddy, buffaloes and poultry plundered. But at each razzia, at least a dozen assailants were killed and wounded chiefly by mine traps.

At last, the enemy came to realize the weakness of the guerillas and militiamen : they had very few rifles and would immediately withdraw into the forest once their mines had exploded. French and puppet commandos then made it a rule to dash off in pursuit of the guerillas. Having had a narrow escape many a time Bui Van Hoa devised a stratagem. Each time he set a mine trap he planted bamboo spikes on the field that the enemy would have to cross. The results were immediate and remarkable. This means of defence was further improved with the local troops' help. Spike traps were set in the vicinity of each mine, particularly near natural obstacles where the guerillas were supposed to get under cover. The old men who kept the secret of making poison, soaked spike tips with it, and in a matter of seven days five thousand pieces of this arm were ready for use.

Faced with the increased resistance of the guerillas, the enemy concentrated a battalion-size element to surround Quyetthang by a pincer movement. The population who had been informed evacuated to the forest while local troops and militia feverishly prepared for the defence.

On October 25, 1948, day was breaking on the mountain shrouded with mist. The aged who had prepared the poisoned bamboo spikes together with many others lay hidden in high and well covered spots to witness the fight. The raiders were long in coming. What a pity if they would not come ! Were they breakfasting ? More probably they were drawing near the village.

Towards noon, an explosion tore the air, followed by others. The firing began. Three enemy detachments come from Vuban in three directions. Though they could not yet get contact with one another, they had to stop and fell down trees and make occasional stretchers to carry the increasing number of killed or wounded by spikes and mines. Casualties amounted to no less than eighty. Starting from the North two other detachments succeeded in joining up at Quyetthang at sunset. But the village was empty of its inhabitants. The mercenaries ransacked the houses and found out two jugs of poisoned alcohol which they drank to the last drop.

Early in the morning, the next day, the raiders had to withdraw.

Thus ended the incursion. But to save his face, the same day the enemy brought cannons on Road 12 and pounded at random the surroundings of the mountain.

RICE TRANSPLANTERS

This winter morning promised to be mild and fine. Large sheets of mist silvered by the rising sun were still floating on the bamboo tops of Vanphu.

From the gate made of branches of this little delta village appeared the slender forms of three girls who were nimbly trotting in the path gossiping and laughing. They slowed down when drawing near the temple built on the side of Road 21 where billeted a unit of puppet soldiers wont to ill-treat and plunder the passers-by and even the people of the neighbouring hamlets.

The girls timidly proceededs towardsa ricefield in front of the temple teased by four soldiers on duty. While puffing away at the hubble-bubble pipe, one of the men said: "What a good luck! Hot tea, fine tobacco with a gurgling pipe and above all girls near at hand. Life is pleasant here!"

Bending their bodies forward, the transplanters gracefully stuck the young rice plants in straight lines. One of them tunefully sang an old love-song.

The soldiers were all eyes and all ears. All like one they put their rifles in a corner of the temple and went out to accost the girls. In the long run the ice was broken, and with flattering remarks they kept the ball rolling. With some visible reluctance the girls consented to come and have some tea in the temple. While the gallant hosts were busing preparing the "tea party", one of the girls hurled a hand-grenade killing one soldier, wounding another and throwing the remainder to the ground. Her mates, quick as lightning, snatched the rifles.

The three transplanters rapidly headed for Yenduong village. The surviving puppet soldiers hastened to alert a nearby post. Since then, the picket at the temple became less arrogant to the passers-by and the neighbouring population.

STORIES OF THE GUERILLA WARFARE IN SOUTH VIETNAM

UNCOMMON GUERILLAS

H. village in Mocay district lazily stretches along a canal. Coconut-trees with their fine slender leaves and nice round fruit are mirrored in the limpid waters.

On a summer-morning, this charming landscape was troubled by the coming of an enemy battalion to herd the population into a "strategic hamlet". Two companies broke into the village after a preventive fusillade. The third with the battalion commander and the American "adviser" which stationed outside, all mortars and heavy machine-guns in fighting position, at last entered the village which the population had visibly evacuated.

Suddenly a deafening buzz was heard.

"Wasps ! wasps !" a soldier shouted.

From everywhere big wasps rushed at the assailants who despairingly fidgetted. Some whose faces and necks were stung by five or six wasps, jumped into the water; each time they emerged they were attacked again, and the pain was still more burning in contact with water. The guerillas naturally appeared in the nick of time, and with their rudimentary rifles, routed the battalion. The survivors ran at full speed to the post, their faces and hands swollen. The American adviser had to be carried by helicopter to a town hospital. Militiamen and guerillas captured a large amount of arms and ammunition.

The secret of the victory was rather simple: at the militiamen's suggestion, the population kept scores of nests of wasps of the fiercest kind. These were closely shut and put on the probable passage of the enemy. At the raiders' arrival, the guerillas pulled a system of string to release the insects.

Here it is to mention the "father of the bee tactics" of Mocay and how he won this title. A poor peasant named Tu learnt that wasps had been used in the first resistance war against the French. Being himself a guerilla he set to experimenting on a wasp-nest not far from his house. He got

stings which once confined him to his bed with a high temperature. He nevertheless spent days and weeks to study the habits of the insects and succeeded in moving the nest without being attacked. In the first campaign his new allies disappeared after the fight. Tu went on experimenting and taming his companions-in-arms. At last they could pursue the enemy on a few kilometres' distance, distinguish friends from foes and be gathered after each action. Tu also found new methods to multiply wasp swarms.

In 1964, Tu laid some thirty ambushes, combining wasps with bamboo spike traps, and put fifty puppet soldiers out of action.

FOUR CARTRIDGES

A blood-thirsty sergeant made frantic efforts to round up "Vietcong" in the hope of being promoted. For nights on end, he posted his platoon at the village cemetery to catch N.F.L. cadres who usually contacted the population under cover of darkness. Another platoon was on the watch on the other side of the "strategic hamlet" to capture eventual survivors.

Aware of the ambush, three girls, Mai, Zung and Hoa, were racking their brains for a means to inform the cadres. After heated discussions they unanimously agreed to an original and costless solution.

That night, when the platoons were lying in wait at their position, the girls glided out of their houses and planted spike traps on the short cut the soldiers would most probably take to reach the hamlet in case of alarm. At some distance between the two detachments, they hid four cartridges in a heap of paddy husk under which they brooded a slow fire.

After midnight when the tired watchers were dozing, four successive detonations were heard.

"Vietcong! Vietcong! Quick, at the double to encircle them," the sergeant shouted triumphantly. He hurriedly led his men to the hamlet, but a bamboo spike pierced his right leg. Others were hit at their chest, belly and arms. While the slightly injured were freeing themselves with difficulty and the severely wounded howling with pain, bullets whizzed and a machine-gun spat fire in their direction. Screwing up

their courage the remainder counter-stroked. When the fusillade stopped before dawn, one realized that there had been an awkward mistake: the two platoons took each other for "Vietcong" and did their best to kill as many as they could. The sergeant was killed.

FOR WANT OF MINES

On receiving an order to attack the military trains passing in the region, the guerilla group leader of Vancanh said to his men, "Our stock of mines is sufficient for some operations only. Can we fulfil our mission without using them?"

After heated discussions Le Van Hoi's proposal for the use of creepers to cause derailments was adopted.

On February 6, 1964, by midnight the group headed for a bushy spot where the railway line had a hairpin bend. They unrivetted a section of it, fastened it with strong creepers, and lay in wait.

At dawn, a military convoy came rumbling. The guerillas pulled on the creepers as strongly as they could. The train ran off the rails then tumbled down with a deafening crash.

The guerillas rushed at the enemy, killed and wounded a great many of them and collected a lot of booty.

Some time later, three other military trains underwent the same fate. The third was preceded by a passenger, the enemy knowing that the N.F.L. never attacked non-military trains. Informed just a few minutes beforehand the guerillas could not relay the bolts and held their breath as the passenger train drew near. Fortunately it went on safe and sound. But the following military convoy could not escape in spite of the enemy's trick.

FEET AND WINGS

Since the liberation of the Badang mountain hamlet, the Taois had repelled many enemy razzias with rifles, cross-

bows, spike and stone traps. The senior of the hamlet having more than one trick up his sleeve, was the soul of the resistance.

The Americans and puppet troops then used the air-route to minimize losses on the unsafe paths. Their planes twice strafed the herd of buffaloes at Badang, and killed three which they carried away by helicopters to improve the soldiers' meals.

One evening, the senior convened the hamlet's population in the big communal house and told them:

"We've already cut off the Americans'feet, but they still have wings. What is to be done? My brain, dark as night, has no idea. Who among you has one?"

The meeting ended late at night with a decision of the kind of "Christopher Columbus'egg": one must shoot at enemy planes.

The next day, the senior and his men concealed themselves in ambush on the border of the Rua valley where a score buffaloes were grazing. They waited three days. No plane came. More than one lost patience. The senior said: "A tree stands firm because its roots go deep into the earth. Ants gather grain by grain to fill their nest. Let my men perseveringly wait."

The fourth day three fighters came and strafed two buffaloes. The guerillas raised their rifles but were ordered to keep quiet.

The fighters were soon replaced by two helicopters. One circled to protect the other which flew very low and dropped a rope-ladder with a soldier standing on it to hook the buffaloes. On the senior's order, his companions fired at both of them. One hurriedly decamped while the other crashed to the earth. The American pilot was killed, two puppet soldiers wounded and the remainder surrendered.

In the meeting convened to mark the victory, each inhabitant of the hamlet received a share of the buffaloes. Raising a pair of horns the senior said:

"Buffaloes, you die so that your companions live. Thanks to you we've clipped the Americans' wings."

"THANK YOU VERY MUCH INDEED"

In her village young Bay was matchless at making and setting spike traps. She never missed the mark every time the enemy came.

In this atomic era, the Americans probably could not permit a nail to put one of their soldiers out of action or into death. They have made a kind of spike-proof ankle-boots with steel soles. Diamond cut diamond. Bay devised another stratagem.

The village was victim of a new raid. Among the assailants an American shuffled along with new model ankle-boots. Making a false step he walked into a trap-ditch. He howled with pain and fainted. The new pattern trap had a median hinge and iron-spiked leaves, two of which pierced his thigh through. Impossible to take the wounded away. The trap had to be unearthed, and the men together with it was carried to the field hospital.

Bay's self-control, too, inspired her mates. One day, a patrol caught her posing a spiked board into a ditch. As the enemy pointed a machine-gun at her imperturbable face, she burst out: "I am unearthing the spikes sowed by the guerillas last night to avoid a trouble with the authorities and to save you. Is this the way you reward me for my job?"

She showed the puppet soldiers two other traps. "Are there many?" they asked her.

"Oh! yes, but I've only seen those near my home." "Thank you very much indeed," the commander said and the patrol frightened went away.

A PIECE OF LUCK

X. village, Duyxuyen district, Quangnam province, had just been liberated. Its population destroyed the "strategic hamlets" into which they had been impounded, and came back to their ancestral houses, ricefields and gardens. After overthrowing the puppet power the peasants resumed their peaceful work under the protection of the N.F.L., and heightened their vigilance knowing that the garrison of the neighbouring post would not let them live in peace.

One morning, an enemy platoon proceeded in single file to X. The guerillas rapidly laid an ambush at the skirt of the village and waited for the aggressors to come within a score metres to open fire. Some mercenaries were killed while the remainder moved back and hastily

jumped into the anti-air raid trenches dug on the roadsides. In their hurry two or three of them plunged into one hole: What a piece of luck! They thought they were safe and even could counter-attack from excellent positions against rifle-armed guerillas.

Pan! Pan! Pan! Hand-grenades set at the bottom of the ditches exploded. The fortunate survivors were captured or took to their heels.

THE HEN

Born of poor peasants thirteen-year-old Cuc did her best to relieve her parents' burden. She reared poultry, took great care of them, and never let them lack worms. It was a pleasure to look at her plump hens surrounded by pretty chickens. Their big eggs were selling like hot cakes.

One day, in her parents' absence, two puppet soldiers broke into her house. They stopped short, before a beautiful hen scratching for food in the middle of the courtyard. What a blessing! Noticing little Cuc's presence, they told her, "Hullo! young girl, give us the hen. She's fit for eating."

Cuc was in a blue funk. She would be very grieved to part with her pet hen. But what upset her was the presence of a N.F.L. militant in a house nearby. How to warn him of the danger?

An idea occurred to her. She gently came near the soldiers and said, smiling: "You may take the hen but don't run after her. She could escape from you and trample on the young vegetable plants in the kitchen-garden. Aim straight and shoot at her feet."

The two soldiers hastily fired at the bird. Informed by the reports the N.F.L. cadre hurriedly left the hamlet.

CHILLY

The little C.N. post struck terror into the local population as there were many torturers in the commando

platoon garrison ed there. With its blockhouses, barbed wire and mine belt it seemed to defy the guerillas.

One afternoon, three persons were seen shooting slightly smoking garbages on a hillock where the population sometimes got rid of their rubbish at some distance of the post. The wind was rising and drove to the post the acrid, pungent and nauseous smoke which soon became very thick and infiltrated into all the rooms and even the pillboxes. Rubbing their eyes filled with tears, coughing and sneezing pitifully, many soldiers hurriedly went out and jumped into the river under the post. Unable to help it those in the blockhouses and on sentry did the same. At this very moment shouts " forward " were heard. The guerillas broke into the fortified compound, tied the remaining mercenaries up, seized their weapons and pointed the machine-guns on the river.

The storming of the post had not cost a single bullet. The guerillas had hid a mixture of droppings and red pepper powder in paddy husk burning on slow fire and sprinkled on the hillock. This new " chemical " product was quite a success.

II — SOUTH VIETNAMESE GUERILLAS OF THE PRESENT RESISTANCE

"COUSIN LIBERATION"

At the other end of a hamlet the N.F.L. troops and guerillas' guns crackled. A pale and worn-faced woman about 35 years old was hurriedly hiding her child of two months in an underground in the heart of her garden. Then, seizing a shovel and a rifle, she ran to the spot where the enemy raiding troops were trying to open a breach.

She crawled towards a hillock, took position and fired at the assailants. From the top of a dyke a puppet soldier unloaded his deadly weapon. The woman, nimble as a squirrel, skirted the terrain and, taking the enemy in the rear, killed him with an aimed shot. Gathering her strength she then climbed the slope to take away his rifle, but fell exhausted on the ricefield.

"Ut Tich! Ut Tich!" a voice whispered in her ear. She opened her eyes: it was her husband, in N.F.L. uniform, who had left her and her six children since nearly a year.

*

Ut Tich was a poor peasant of Travinh province. Born of a poorest family, she had, when very young, to hire herself as a maid-of-all-work at a big local landlord's. Toiling from morning to night, the thin and lank girl never ate her fill and was daily pommelled or caned. One day, she was tied up by her masters for a slip. A young man-servant untied her. They married soon after and together shared the same fate of slavery for over ten years.

The August 1945 revolution liberated them.

But the French soon came back and with them the landlords and their lackeys.

Ut Tich and her husband joined the guerilla. As a scout, an ambulance worker then a combatant, she participated in dozens of engagements. During a river ambush she killed two enemies on a barge, and jumping into it, took away a machine-gun. After a miscarried attempt on Hum, a post-chief notorious for his cruelty, husband and wife were sent

to do propaganda work near another garrison. They succeeded in capturing six rifles and blowing up an important bridge on the Caolanh — Longxuyen road.

*

Ten years after, the French withdrew to be replaced by the Americans. Ut Tich and her husband started a new battle for the right to live.

One day, on the way to the market, she met an enemy company going on a raiding operation. She let them pass, then with a borrowed bicycle, took a short cut through the field to inform her guerilla group. Before the ambush was ready, she had time to go home to hide her children without forgetting to suckle the youngest. Then rifle in hand, she went to the agreed spot. The enemy taken by surprise suffered heavy losses. During the fight, relaying the badly injured machine-gunner, Ut Tich killed two enemies and wounded many others.

Near her house, the puppets 'watchtower was a plague for the population. She proposed to remove it by a stratagem. Some time after making acquaintance with the post-chief who was a gourmand, together with her comrades-in-arms she prepared a banquet in a guerilla's house and invited almost all the garrison. When the hosts were half-drunken Ut Tich took out a Tommy-gun hidden a few paces from the table and levelled it at them. The soldiers were at once taken prisoner by the guerillas. Fifteen rifles were captured, and the post occupied.

Another time, the couple boldly stormed D.T. village post. Then at the point of her Tommy-gun Ut Tich forced three puppet soldiers to carry weapons and ammnuition to a guerilla base.

On the 1965 New Year's Eve, though pregnant, she led an armed propaganda group to C., a crowded town. When the work ended at daybreak, Ut Tich ordered her men to withdraw. A Tommy-gun slinging across her back, she stayed alone, hidden near the bus station at the locality entrance to distribute N.F.L.'s leaflets, which her groups could not do the night before because of the rain.

A big bus came to stop. The bulk of the passengers were townsfolk, some of them having their children or brothers enlisted in the puppet army. Ut Tich headed towards them and smiling, handed them the leaflets. An old woman,

moved to tears, kissed her and turning to the people around, said : " While we celebrate the New Year's Day this pregnant woman wanders on the road. For whom does she endure all the hardships of the maquis ? "

She then whispered to Ut Tich's ear,

" My child, tell the Revolution* that the people in the town always think of it. "

People gathered in a circle around Ut Tich, and asked her about the military situation, the life in the liberated zone, and her own. She answered all the questions, but about her name, she simply said, " Dear compatriots, just call me " Cousin Liberation ".

At the First Congress of Heroes and Emulation Fighters of the N.F.L. armed forces early in 1965 Ut Tich was awarded the title Heroine of the Liberation Army.

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* The people usually call N.F.L. Liberation or Revolution.

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